

PROSPECT;

OR

VIEW OF THE MORAL WORLD.

BY ELIHU PALMER.

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*Comments upon the Sacred Writings of the Jews and
Christians. Exodus Chapter 6 and 7.*

IN this sixth chapter there is nothing which merits particular remark or attention except the singular circumstance of the God of Moses having given to himself a higher degree of exaltation. He had formerly passed under the name and character of Lord—of God—and of God Almighty; this he declared to Moses had been the fact in his negotiations and concerns with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but now he assumes a higher tone, and dignifies himself with the name of Jehovah. Splendid efforts of royalty, and worthy of the splendid character of the Hebrew divinity! This matter is thus stated in verse 3d, of this chapter, “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.” This circumstance furnishes lessons of instructive contemplation upon the subject of Theism. It proves the truth of an observation that true Theists have often made—which is, that instead of man’s being made in the image of God, as the christian religion will have it, the reverse of the position is true,—man has made God after his image, and modified the attributes of the divinity upon the principle and plan of his own sensation, and the general qualities of his own nature. The history of all nations proves, beyond all contradiction, that Theologists have raised up and let down the character of their different Gods according to their own will and pleasure.—Moses is doing the same in this conjuring

farce. It is not the Creator of the universe that speaks in these cases where he is said to have spoken—it is the impostor alone that appears. If God had ever spoken to man, he would have spoken in a language uniform and universal; there would have been no grades or degradations in his character; he would not have been one thing to-day and another to-morrow; but he would have appeared in that high and commanding attitude which comports with the laws of nature and essential qualities which reason and philosophy have a right to ascribe to that being in whom all excellence is concentrated. These Hebrew conjurers however are leading their god about and directing his operations as if he were their servant and not their creator; while the magicians of the Egyptian king are opposing him as a false divinity in whom they have no confidence, and whose character forms only the basis on which they rest for new excitements in the conjuring art of opposition to the conjuring Moses. In the seventh chapter of this book of Exodus the case is reversed, instead of reducing celestial excellence to a human standard, terrestrial infinity is exalted and made equal to divine perfection itself. In proof of which see the first verse of this chapter in which are the following words: “And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aron thy brother shall be thy prophet.” Here it appears that Moses is mounting high and soaring aloft upon the wings of celestial glory. He has become a god; but who made him such?—not the Creator of the world, for surely he does not and cannot make man equal to himself. But Moses says that it was the Lord that did it, and who was this Lord of Moses? are we to consider him in the light of a European despot exercising the power of creating an order of nobility, and of giving to human existence a spurious and factitious character? Moses it is said is the author of the book of Exodus; if this be true, he must be full of vanity, arrogance, and presumption, as in the present case, where he says that he was made into a god, and Aron was to hold only the subordinate station of a prophet. When

man leaves his true condition in nature, and pretends to be what he is not, and what he cannot be, he deserves no credit—his word is not to be taken—trick and impostor characterize all his operations.

FOR THE PROSPECT.

The following Laws, recited in the Inquisitive Traveller, by E. CHURCH, will shew whether the institutions of our ancestors, so much extolled by biggots and hypocrits, are worthy of that respect and veneration which is contended for.

L A W S

Made in the dominion of New-Haven, in the colony of Connecticut, at its first settlement.

THE governor and magistrates convened in general assembly, are the supreme power, under God, of this independent dominion.

From the determination of the assembly no appeal shall be made.

The governor is amenable to the voice of the people.

The governor shall have only a single vote in determining any question, except a casting vote when the assembly shall be equally divided.

The assembly of the people shall not be dismissed by the governor, but shall dismiss itself.

Conspiracy against this dominion shall be punished with death.

Whoever says there is a power and jurisdiction above and over this dominion, shall suffer death, and loss of property.

Whoever attempts to change or overturn this dominion shall suffer death.

The judges shall determine controversies without a jury.

No one shall be a freeman, or give a vote, unless he

be converted, and a member in full communion of one of the churches allowed in this dominion.

No man shall hold any office, who is not found in the faith, and faithful to this dominion.

Each freeman shall swear by the blessed God to bear true allegiance to this dominion, and that Jesus is the only king.

No Quaker, or dissenter from the established worship of this dominion, shall be allowed to give a vote for the election of magistrates, or any officer.

No food or lodging shall be offered to a Quaker, Adamite, or other heretic.

If any person turns Quaker, he shall be banished, and not suffered to return but on pain of death.

No priest* shall abide in the dominion: he shall be banished, and suffer death on his return.

Priests may be seized by any one without a warrant.

No one to cross a river but with an authorized ferryman.

No one shall run on the sabbath-day, or walk in his garden, or elsewhere, except reverently to and from meeting.

No one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep houses, cut hair, or shave on the sabbath day.

No woman shall kiss her children on the sabbath or fasting day.

The sabbath shall begin at sun-set on Saturday.

To pick an ear of corn growing in a neighbour's garden shall be deemed theft.

A person accused of trespass in the night, shall be judged guilty, unless he clear himself by his oath.

When it appears that an accused has confederates, and he refuses to discover them, he may be racked.

No one shall buy or sell lands without the permission of the selectmen.

A drunkard shall have a master appointed by the select

* Those who perform the sacerdotal functions in Protestant Churches or meetings are called *ministers*, NOT *priests*—a nice distinction without a difference.

men, who are to debar him from the liberty of buying and selling.

Whoever publishes a lie to the prejudice of his neighbour, shall sit in the stocks, or be whipped ten stripes.

No minister shall keep a school.

Every rateable person who refuses to pay his proportion to the support of the minister of the town or parish, shall be fined by the court two pounds, and four pounds every quarter, until he or she pay the rate to the minister.

Men-stealers shall suffer death.

Whoever wears clothes trimmed with gold, silver, or bone lace, above two shillings per yard, shall be presented by the grand jurors, and the selectmen shall tax the offender at three hundred pounds estate.

A debtor in prison, swearing he has no estate, shall be let out, and sold to make satisfaction.

Whoever sets a fire in the woods, and it burns a house, shall suffer death: and persons suspected of this crime shall be imprisoned without the benefit of bail.

Whoever brings cards or dice into this dominion shall pay a fine of five pounds.

No one shall read common prayers, keep Christmas, or set days, make minced-pies, dance play cards, or play on any instrument of music, except the drum, trumpet, and jew's harp.

No gospel minister shall join people in marriage; the magistrates only shall join in marriage, as they may do it with less scandal to Christ's church.

When parents refuse their children convenient marriages, the magistrate shall determine the point.

The selectmen, on finding children ignorant, may take them away from their parents, and put them into better hands, at the expence of their parents.

Fornication shall be punished by compelling marriage, or as the court shall think proper.

Adultery shall be punished with death.

A man that strikes his wife shall pay a fine of ten pounds; a woman that strikes her husband shall be punished as the court directs.

A wife shall be deemed good evidence against her husband.

No man can court a maid in person, or by letter, without first obtaining consent of her parents : five pounds penalty for the first offence, ten pounds for the second, and for the third imprisonment during the pleasure of the court.

Married persons must live together, or be imprisoned.

Every male shall have his hair cut round according to a cap.

The foregoing laws, as well as all those made before, and since, by devotees, will remain eternal monuments of the tyrannical, oppressive, persecuting, and cruel spirit of all religions, and religious sects, when not under the direction and control of reason. Instead of being called *blue* laws—like those of *Draco*, they should have been written in *blood*, and called *RED* laws. Instead of the sober precepts of paternal legislators, as might naturally have been expected from men who had recently fled from oppression, they unfortunately brought the contagion with them, so that we see nothing but the bitterness, the malignity, and ravings of religious insanity and persecution. Every natural and moral precept, principle, and right, are there most grossly and shamefully violated. *By those laws*, the most favoured and happy were those who were banished ; as those who were constrained to live under, and to submit to such laws, could only be considered as victims in an inquisition.

As physical anatomists dig up dead bodies, and preserve their skeletons, for the use and benefit of the living, so I would presume I am not less justifiable, as a moral anatomist, in recalling to view the frailties of our forefathers, by hanging out their abortions, or deformed monsters, called *Laws, in terrorem*, that the world may judge of the total insufficiency of religion, independent of reason and morality, to promote temporal peace ; and that a house built on such a slippery foundation cannot stand.

*Profession of faith of a Savoyard Curate, from
Rousseau, continued from our last.*

No material being can be self-active ; and I perceive that I am so. It is in vain to dispute with me so clear a point ; my own sentiment carries with it a stronger conviction than any reason which can ever be brought against it. I have a body, on which other bodies act, and which acts reciprocally on them. This reciprocal action is indubitable ; but my will is independent of my senses. I can either consent to or resist their impressions ; I am either vanquished or victor, and perceive clearly within myself when I act according to my will, and when I submit to be governed by my passions. I have always the power to will, though not the force to execute it. When I give myself up to any temptation, I act from the impulse of external objects. When I reproach myself for my weakness in so doing, I listen only to the dictates of my will : I am a slave in my vices, and free in my repentance : the sentiment of my liberty is effaced only by my depravation, and when I prevent the voice of the soul from being heard, in opposition to the laws of the body.

All the knowledge I have of violation, is deduced from a sense of my own ; and the understanding is known no better. When I am asked, what is the cause that determines my will ? I ask in my turn, what is the cause that determines my judgement ? for it is clear that these two causes make but one ; and, if we conceive that man is active in forming his judgement of things, that his understanding is only a power of comparing and judging, we shall see that his liberty is only a similar power, or one derived from this : he chooses the good as he judges of the true ; and for the same reason as he deduces a false judgment, he makes a bad choice. What then is the cause that determines his will ? It is his judgment. And what is the cause that determines his judgment ? It is his intelligent faculty, his power of judging ; the determining cause lies in himself. If we go beyond this point, I know nothing of the matter.

Not that I can suppose myself at liberty, not to will my own good, or to will my own evil: but my liberty consists in this very circumstance, that I am incapable to will any thing but what is useful to me, or at least what appears so, without any foreign object interfering in my determination. Does it follow from hence that I am not my own master, because I am incapable of assuming another being, or of divesting myself of what is essential to my existence.

The principle of action lies in the will of a free being; we can go no farther, in search of its source. It is not the word liberty that has no signification; it is that of necessity. To suppose any act or effect, which is not derived from an active principle, is indeed to suppose effects without a cause. Either there is no first impulse, or every first impulse can have no prior cause; nor can there be any such thing as will, without liberty. Man is, therefore, a free agent, and as such animated by an immaterial substance: this is my third article of faith. From these three first you may easily deduce all the rest, without my continuing to number them.

If man be an active and free being, he acts of himself; none of his spontaneous actions, therefore, enter into the general system of Providence, nor can be imputed to it. Providence doth not contrive the evil, which is the consequence of man's abusing the liberty his Creator gave him: it only doth not prevent it, either because the evil, which so impotent a being is capable of doing, is beneath its notice, or because it cannot prevent it, without laying a restraint upon his liberty, and causing a greater evil, by debasing his nature.

To be continued.

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